

March 14, 2000

Docket No: 98P-1194  
Commissioner Jane Henney  
Food and Drug Administration  
5360 Fishers Lane  
Room 1061 (HFA-305)  
Rockville, MD 20852

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Commissioner Henney:

I am writing to request that the FDA remove rBGH from the market. I am making this request as a concerned citizen. I am not a scientist but I do not believe one has to be a scientist to use some common sense. Furthermore, I think decisions surrounding new technologies are too important to be left solely to the scientists and other so-called "experts" many of whom are in the employ of the very organizations who stand to profit most handsomely from their "science".


Not only am I a concerned citizen, I am a seriously angry citizen. Let's just get real here for a minute about how rBGH came to market in the first place. I won't go into all the gory details but, suffice to say, the FDA approved rBGH for market based solely on safety assurances by Monsanto (the company poised to profit from the product). When reservations were expressed about the safety of rBGH by one of the FDA's senior scientists, Dr. Richard Burroughs, he was fired. The FDA position on rBGH was then written by a Monsanto scientist, Dr. Margaret Miller. Tell me, Commissioner Henney, how can a citizen possibly trust the decisions of agencies such as the FDA when there is so often a revolving door between the FDA and corporations, in particular Monsanto, the producer of rBGH?

Monsanto's own testing showed that the hormone was absorbed into the bloodstream of rats who were fed rBGH and that milk produced with rBGH contained up to five times the normal levels of IGF-1, the largest known risk factor for several common cancers. Furthermore, as the hormone treatment has been widely used in dairy farming in this country, and as results of independent research are made public, it has become obvious that there are vital concerns about human and animal health resulting from the use rBGH. Elevated levels of IGF-1 in milk lead to elevated levels in the blood of the human consumer because it is not destroyed in the digestion process and is easily absorbed across the intestinal wall. In addition to this cancer risk for humans, animals treated with rBGH have significant health and reproductive problems and a reduced life expectancy. As a result of mastitis infections, pus and elevated levels of white blood cells have been found in the rBGH milk. In addition, these animals are treated with high and continuing doses of antibiotics which leave residues in milk, contributing to the growth of antibiotic resistance in bacteria, a pressing human health issue.

And yet, Monsanto and the FDA have both repeatedly insisted that milk from cows treated with rBGH is no different than non-rBGH milk.

Words fail to express the outrage that I and, increasingly, many other citizens feel at huge corporations which (with the assistance of the governmental agencies charged to regulate them) are ramming their latest moneymaking schemes, literally and figuratively, down our throats. The sole reason corporations exist is to make money. As long as they show a profit from their products, corporations care not a whit about the effects of these products on people, on other species, on the environment. Does the FDA really think that citizens are so ignorant as to believe that rBGH milk is no different than milk from cows which have not been treated? Can you now do the job you should have done in 1993? In the interests of public (not corporate) health, remove rBGH from the market immediately.

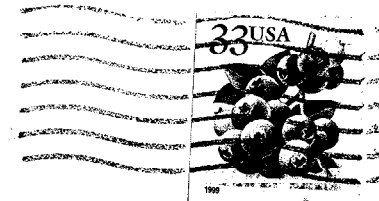
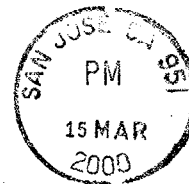
Thank you.

  
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